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ABSTRACT

The image of the librarian has engendered much discussion among professional librarians. Children's fiction and picture books are good mediums in which to examine the image of the librarian, since they provide impressionable children some of their earliest cultural knowledge. Children's authors can supply powerful images by means of text and illustrations that challenge or perpetuate stereotypes. The purpose of this research is to study the image of the librarian in children's literature in order to see how closely that image matches or differs from the traditional stereotypical image of the librarian used as a benchmark in the research of Barnhart and Elliot. Works published before 1990 will be compared with books published in 1990 and later in order to see if the image of the librarian in children's literature has changed to keep pace with modern technological changes. The method used in this research is content analysis. Eighty-eight children's fiction books and picture books were examined for their portrayal of 125 librarians. Major findings were that the only stereotypical traits persisting in the librarians in children's fiction are that the librarian is still female, white, polite and refined, and helpful. As the librarian's image evolves, the traditional negative stereotype is being replaced by a more positive contemporary view. Appendices include the librarian profile coding sheet, and reading list. (Contains 27 references.) (AEF)

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LIBRARIAN'S IMAGE IN CHILDREN'S FICTION

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library
and Information Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree Master of Library and Information Science

by

Barbara Kitchen

December 2000

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

The image of the librarian has engendered much discussion among professional librarians. As far back as 1909, a librarian deplored the use of the negative stereotype employed by fiction writers, which portrayed librarians as " 'old fogy bookworms' " (McReynolds 1985, 25). The stereotype of the "shushing spinster complete with bun" (Cravey 1990, 28) is a familiar one. According to Helene Woodhams, physical beauty in the typical librarian is "uncommon, unexpected, and jarring when it exists" (Woodhams 1996, 355). Part of the stereotype is also that the librarian is almost always female (Burton 1993, 72). Arnold Sable further describes the librarian of the stereotype as:

> middle-aged and most uncommunicative. She exists to put a damper on all spontaneity, silencing the exuberance of the young with a harsh look or hiss. Her only task seems to be checking out books and collecting fines. Books to her are best left upon the library shelves where they do not become dirtied or worn...there at the desk she will stay, stamping out her books until her retirement (Sable 1988, 748).

Concern over the effect of negative stereotypes on librarians' self-esteem prompted the *American Libraries* journal, since 1985, to devote its "Image" column to monitoring the depiction of librarians in the media. George Sapp also blames the media for disseminating the unfavorable image of librarians, calling the books we read "vehicles for perpetuating the stereotypes" (Sapp 1987, 29). Both Sapp and Pauline Wilson (1982) point out that our negative image hinders recruitment and pay equity. In her book, *Stereotype and Status: Librarians in the United States*, Wilson explains the self-perpetuating cycle saying:

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> That the public stereotype is a crucial factor in recruiting is beyond doubt. An unfavorable public stereotype, one that is inaccurate, can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. As it is disseminated and becomes firmly implanted in the public mind, it begins to become true, for it attracts persons who are like it. The situation then becomes a vicious circle in which the now partially true stereotype attracts persons who in turn make the prophecy more true. That this has occurred in the library profession there can be little doubt (Wilson 1982, 136-7).

Besides diminishing self-esteem and status, Mary Land (1988) says that research indicates that patrons may be avoiding the reference desk because of their negative perception of the librarian. Penny Cowell echoes the same opinion when she says that the media's portrayal of the librarian as a "fussy old woman of either sex, myopic and repressed, brandishing or perhaps cowering behind a date stamp" discourages two-thirds of the population from using the library (Cowell 1980, 167).

Rationale for Study

Problems generated by the librarian's negative image have motivated several studies analyzing the image of the librarian in literature (Long 1957; Heylman 1975; Barnhart 1991; Pultorak 1993; Elliot 1996; Buie 1998). Two such studies include Linda Barnhart's detailed content analysis of the librarian's image in twenty-two mystery novels (1991) and Margaret's Elliot's replication of that study using twenty-five romance novels (1996).

The field of library science has been greatly impacted by recent technological innovations, and as a result has attracted a more diverse group of people from computer science and other technological backgrounds. More males are entering the field. This could alter the librarian stereotype, so that librarians are presented more accurately as energetic, progressive, multi-skilled and computer savvy professionals.

In order to develop effective strategies to improve the image of the librarian, we

must first evaluate the way librarians are being portrayed now.

Purpose of the Study

Children's fiction and picture books are good mediums in which to examine the image of the librarian, since they provide impressionable children some of their earliest cultural knowledge. Children's authors can supply powerful images by means of text and illustrations that challenge or perpetuate stereotypes.

The purpose of this research is to study the image of the librarian in children's literature in order to see how closely that image matches or differs from the traditional stereotypical image of the librarian used as a benchmark in the research of Barnhart and Elliot. Works published before 1990 will be compared with books published in 1990 and later in order to see if the image of the librarian in children's literature has changed to keep pace with modern technological changes.

Definition of Terms

A *stereotype* is defined as "a standardized mental picture held in common by members of a pre 1990 titlesnd representing an oversimplified opinion, affective attitude or uncritical judgement" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed.*, s.v. stereotype).

In this research paper *librarian* will mean anyone in the story who appears to work in a library, since authors and readers seem to identify all library staff, whether degreed librarians, clerks, or student workers, as librarians. The fictional librarian may play a maior or minor role in the story and may or may not be depicted working in a library.

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Limitations of Study

This study is limited to children's fiction and picture books that are circulating in Cleveland area libraries. The books are published between 1938 and 1999.

CHAPTER II.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review involved searching in professional journals and books to assess the importance of the issue of the librarian's image. The investigation revealed many articles based on opinion, a few surveys and some content analyses of various genres. For the most part content analysis research involved the examination of small samples of materials, yielding a low level of generalization. Content analysis of the librarian's image in children's books was not extensive.

Pauline Wilson (1982) has published the most comprehensive study of the librarian's image in her book, *Stereotype and Status: Librarians in the United States.* Wilson uses quantitative content analyses of all writings by librarians which concerned the stereotype from the period of 1921 to 1978. Other studies dealing with personality, occupational choice, and library education and how they pertain to the librarian's image are summarized in the book. Wilson blames librarians for reinforcing the stereotype by bringing attention to it in their writings (Wilson 1982, 186). This seems ironic considering her own extensive work in this area.

Searches using the subject heading or keywords "librarian image" or "librarian stereotype" were performed in Dissertations Abstracts, ERIC, Periodicals Index, Library Literature, and the Kent State University School of Library and Information Science Abstracts databases. These sources revealed many citations, which led to articles in the professional literature documenting the negative librarian stereotype. Most of the articles, like Karen A. Romanko's editorial in the "My Say" column of *Publisher's Weekly*, are opinions denouncing the stereotype. Romanko confronts the librarian's negative image by stating that she herself is "...not an old lady...[is] happily

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married...[does not] wear a bun...or orthopedic shoes" (Romanko 1986, 88). Her opinion is that the general public has an incorrect perception of the librarian and that the librarian must work to change that image (Romanko 1986).

Surveys of public perceptions of librarians have been conducted by Joan R. Duffy (1990), Pamela Jordon (1991), and Leslie Ann Pardo (1992). All three found that the traditional image of the librarian is not prevalent among the samples of the populations surveyed. Duffy and Jordon surveyed the attitudes of school-age children, while Pardo surveyed the opinions of library science graduate students.

Several studies focus on the librarian's image in mass media. Stephen Abram and Maggie Weaver examined the stereotype in advertising and found much librarian bashing. One example is the advertisement promoting Info World and CompuServe which showed a "bunned and be-spectacled Ms. Wiggins frowning over her half-rims while stamping out books. The copy read 'Sometimes It's Easier To Ask A Machine' " (Abram and Weaver 1990, 401). Vivienne R. Bourkoff and Julia Binder Woolridge (1985) made a content analysis of 132 newspaper articles making reference to librarians. They concluded that while stereotypes appear, the media is also representing the profession as dynamic and progressive. They also feel that librarians must take responsibility for what reaches the public through newspapers and other media .

Some articles and research papers deal with the image of the librarian as depicted in the media in general, or in particular literature genres. For example, Rosalee McReynolds (1985) discusses the portrayal of the librarian in popular culture from 1876-1950, including movies, novels, magazine covers and general attitudes about the status of women, which affect the image of librarians. McReynolds concludes that, with a few

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exceptions, the stereotype is not found in popular literature. She also points out that, "If it is to be found anywhere, it is within the profession itself and within social attitudes held about—and—by women" (McReynolds 1985, 27).

Helene Woodhams' belief in the power of novelists over public perceptions led her to analyze thirteen novels in several genres (Woodhams 1996). Her conclusions disagreed with McReynolds', in that she found that literary librarians in this small sample are depicted "more frequently as caricatures than real people" (Woodhams 1996, 359). They tend to be older, unmarried females, who are unattractive and tidy, and although positive traits are attributed to them, "efficiency is often stressed far more often than professionalism" (Woodhams 1996, 359). Woodhams' conclusions agree with the findings articulated in the professional literature of librarianship, that public recognition of our profession is lacking.

The image of the librarian in literature has been studied by several Kent State graduate students. The first was Lucille Eileen Long (1957). Long searched professional literature for evidence of the librarian's traditional traits, and developed a detailed list with which she analyzed 135 works written within a sixty-year time period. The stereotype Long discovered included that the librarian was a physically unattractive, unfashionable spinster, lacking in style, bookish, doing boring work, overprotective of library property, insisting on quiet, and having little professional training. Using content analysis she concluded that the stereotype of the librarian was pervasive in the literature of her time. Long also pointed out, with the backing of factual information, that there was an element of truth in the stereotype that made it believable to the public.

Other graduate students followed Long's lead and analyzed the librarian's image in literature: Linda Barnhart, in mystery novels (1991); Margaret Elliot, in romance

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novels (1996); and Leslie A. Pultorak, in poetry (1993). They examined the portrayal of librarians and measured how closely the librarian of fiction resembled the negative stereotype. Barnhart developed a Librarian Profile Coding Sheet partially based on Long's categories of the stereotypical librarian, which Barnhart expanded and further delineated. Elliot used Barnhart's coding sheet and replicated her study with romance novels. The students found a far more positive image in fiction than in the stereotype, which indicates that the librarian's image may be changing.

Katherine Heylman (1975) was the first to analyze the image of the librarian in children's fiction. She scored the charteristics of age, marital status, appearance, attitude toward patrons, and general image left by the book for twenty-two children's books. Jill Buie (Feehan and Buie 1998) studied eighteen children's books and partially replicated Heylman's research. A generally positive image was observed, although the literature sample size was limited in both studies. A larger sample of literature is needed to provide a higher level of generalization.

The issue of changing the librarian's image has been a hot topic in professional writing for many years. There are many examples of librarians exhorting their colleagues to promote themselves. Alison Hall tells us that "we are, ultimately, responsible for our own image...We have to move beyond the bun, and show the world that there is more to us than our perceived stereotype" (Hall 1992, 347). Patricia Glass Schuman (1990), Mary Land (1988) and Major Owens of the library of Congress (1979) agree that the public should be educated as to what librarians actually do and what valuable professional services they provide. Bourkoff and Woolridge urge promotion of computer services and the "potential of reference service" (Bourkoff and Woolridge 1986, 62).

Dan Hutchins says that we should campaign to reshape our image by identifying ourselves with information professionals; however, he also points out that "technical proficiency is no longer enough…[we must also] include social skills, personality, and a love of people" (Hutchins 2000, 57). Linda Wallace, director of the ALA's Public Information Office gives much advice emphasizing customer service. She tells us not to neglect the impact we have on children. She says, "think of them as the newspaper editors, TV producers, taxpayers, and image-makers of tomorrow" (Wallace 1989, 25). Echoing this sentiment are the results of the SLA Task Force survey of community leaders, politicians, lawmakers, government officials, and academic presidents, producers and writers, which show that 62% formed their image of librarians in childhood (Schuman 1990).

Norman Stevens gives us food for thought when he considers the shape of our changing image as portrayed in the professional journals, *American Libraries, Library Journal,* and *Wilson Library Bulletin.* He finds that the emerging image represents the librarian as a "contemporary professional lacking in all distinction" (Stevens 1988, 348). Stevens is disturbed that we may be trading a distinctive stereotype for a bland one and concludes saying, " To lose an issue that for so long has furnished our profession with so much anger, concern, enjoyment, and laughter—especially if it should come about as a result of the loss of the identity threatened by the new stereotype—truly would be a shame" (Stevens 1988, 349).

CHAPTER III.

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is content analysis. Ninety-three children's fiction books and picture books were examined for their portrayal of one hundred and thirty librarians. When the same librarian was depicted in more than one book by the same author, such as Madam Pince in the *Harry Potter* books; Hyacinth Priest in Coville's *Jeremy Thatcher Dragon Hatcher* and *The Skull of Truth;* and Miss Eels of John Bellairs' mysteries; the title which furnished the most complete description was used. The books featuring librarians were selected from *A to Zoo: Subject Access to Children's Picture Books* (Lima 1998), and *Best Books for Children* (Bowker 1994). Other books were found by searching the Cuyahoga County Public Library catalog and Cleveland Public Library catalog using the subject headings "librarians" and "libraries." Two of the articles mentioned in the literature review contained bibliographies of relevant children's books (Heylman 1975; Feehan and Buie 1998). Some books were found by asking subscribers to the Kent State School of Library Science Listserv to contribute suggestions. Forty-five books were published between 1938 and 1989; forty-eight were published during 1990 and later.

All of the titles are currently circulating in the Cuyahoga County Public Library or Cleveland Public Library system, so the image of the librarian presented has the actual potential for affecting the perceptions of modern readers.

After reading each selection, a Librarian Profile Coding Sheet was filled out for each librarian character. This form, designed as a questionnaire, can be found in Appendix A. The coding sheet was based on Linda Barnhart's model (Barnhart 1990), which she devised in part by using a list of stereotypical traits of librarians created by

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Lucille Eileen Long (1957). Some adaptations were made to suit the purposes of this study; for example, Barnhart's section on the librarian's attitude toward sexual conduct was deemed inappropriate and irrelevant for children's books. An additional question regarding the librarian's attitude to patrons was added.

The coding sheet includes twenty-five questions, each focusing on a specific trait of the stereotyped librarian. The answers correspond to the degree the librarian displays that trait. Usually the first option for an answer best fits the stereotype. Related questions are grouped together in the following categories: General Information about the Librarian; Appearance; Personal Traits; Professional Traits; and Scholarship, General, and Technical Knowledge.

For some traits there was not enough information to make an accurate response, therefore the total librarians evaluated (N) varies for each characteristic examined. For the question on the librarian's race, the librarian was assumed to be white when there was no indication to the contrary, since this has been a stereotypical feature of the librarian that reflects reality.

After all books were evaluated, the answers on the coding sheets were tallied for books before 1990 and for books after and including 1990.

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CHAPTER IV.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The coding sheet (Appendix A) was used to evaluate each of the one hundred and thirty fictional librarians depicted in ninety-three children's books in order to discover how their traits matched or differed from stereotypical librarian traits. Responses based on books published *before 1990*, which shall be referred to as **pre 1990 titles,** were compared to responses based on books *from 1990 to 1999*, which shall be referred to as **1990+ titles**. A discussion of the findings for each question on the coding sheet follows. The feminine pronoun, "she," will refer to both male and female librarians, since the overwhelming majority of fictional librarians are women.

General Information about the Librarian

Questions in this category gather basic facts about the librarian in order to clarify her portrayal and examine stereotypical traits.

The first question was designed to determine the librarian's role in the novel. To be deemed a major character the librarian had to have a significant impact on plot development. Otherwise she was considered a minor character.

The librarians in pre 1990 titles consisted of 24 (38.7%) major characters and 38 (61.3%) minor characters, compared to 45 (66.2%) major characters and 23 (33.8%) minor characters in 1990+ titles. The greater proportion of major characters in books published after 1989 may indicate a growing importance given to librarians by authors.

The expectation that the majority of librarians would be women, matching the stereotype, was proved true by the results of the second question. However, the image is changing and seems to reflect the greater number of men entering the profession. The

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data shows that 55 (88.7%) pre 1990 titles' librarians were female, while 53 (77.9%) 1990+'s librarians were female.

None of the librarians in either group matched the stereotypical image of the librarian as an old person. Only 14 (25.9%) pre 1990 titles' librarians were judged to be over 50, and 15 (22.7 %) were assigned to the over 50 category in 1990+ titles. The largest group of librarians, that is 21(38.8%) in pre 1990 titles, and 31 (47.0%) in 1990+ titles, were middle-aged (35 to 49 years old). The "young" librarians (under 35) outnumbered the "old", comprising 19 (35.2%) of pre 1990 titles and 20 (30.3%) of 1990+ books. The impression that librarians are old is refuted by the portrayals of fictional librarians in children's books and shown in the following table.

Table 1

Distribution of Librarians by Publication Date and Age

Age	Titles Pre 1990		Titles 1990+	
	f	%	f	%
Old (50+)	14	25.9	15	22.7
Middle-aged (35-49)	21	38.8	31	47.0
Young (under 35)	19	35.2	20	30.3
Total Evaluated (N)	54	100.0	66	100.0

Since professional literature gives some consideration to the important topic of recruiting minority librarians, the characteristic of race is given attention in question four. It is assumed that the stereotypical librarian is white, and accordingly, when race was not specified, white was marked as the answer by default. The findings were that the stereotype was confirmed with 57 (91.9%) being white in pre 1990 titles, and 55 (80.9%) being white in 1990+ books. Other races represented were African-Americans with 5

(8.1%) in pre 1990 titles, increasing to 6 (8.8%) in 1990+; 1 (1.5%) Asian in 1990+; and 6 (8.8%) in 1990+ were of no race, but were instead animal personifications in the form of a couple of rabbits, a sheep, a dinosaur, a dragon and a monster. Table 2 shows the evolving distribution of librarians by publication date and race.

Table 2

Distribution of Librarians by Publication Date and Race/Ethnic Background

Age	Titles Pre 1990		Titles 1990+	
	f	%		f
White	57	91.9	55	80.9
African American	5	8.1	6	8.8
Asian	0	00.0	1	1.5
Animal Personification	0	00.0	6	8.8
Total Evaluated (N)	62	100.0	68	100.0

As for the stereotypical image of the librarian as an unattractive, unfashionable old woman with her hair in a bun, the majority of librarians evaluated in this content analysis did not support this image. In pre 1990 titles 18 (35.3%) librarians were labeled attractive, and 15 (29.4%) fairly good looking (N=51), while 19 (31.1%) librarians in 1990+ titles were attractive and 17 (27.9%) were fairly good looking (N=61).

Thirty-four librarians (85.0%) in pre 1990 titles (N = 40) were rated fashionable, but 22 could not be rated in this category for lack of descriptive material. In 1990+ titles (N = 54), 39 (72%) proved to be fashionable although 13 could not be rated. The greater number of librarians who could not be rated points to a less clearly defined image in terms of clothing in the older group of publications than in the more recent group.

Question seven was formulated to address Stevens' concern that the librarian's attire was becoming indistinguishable from other professionals (Stevens 1988). The findings of this analysis correspond to Stevens' observation to some extent, with a small

growth in the percentage of librarians dressed appropriately for a business environment. The percentage of librarians sporting business attire grows from 27 (67.5%) in pre 1990 titles (N = 40) to 37 (69.8%) in 1990+ titles (N = 53). There is also less emphasis on descriptions or illustrations of clothing in the older titles (pre 1990) where 22 (35.5%) librarians wore clothing that could not be labeled as suitable or unsuitable for a business environment due to insufficient description (N=62). This compared to 13 (20.6%) not rated in the more recent ones published in 1990 or later (N=68). A greater emphasis on describing clothing may show a greater importance being placed on the librarian's appearance in more recent times.

The notion that most librarians wear buns is refuted with the results of the question on hairstyles. Although hairstyles of 21 of pre 1990 titles' librarian's were not mentioned, of the 41 remaining, 31 (75.6%) were considered stylish. In 1990+ only 14 hairdos were left nondescript, and 32 (59.3 %) were stylish (N=54).

The bespectacled librarian myth was also disproved with 28 (70%) of pre 1990 titles' librarians without glasses (N= 40) and 34 (60.7%) of 1990+ titles' librarians not wearing glasses (N=56). Again in the description of the pre 1990 titles' librarians, there was a greater number (22) and percentage (35.5%) than the 1990+ librarians' number (12) and percentage (17.6%) whose appearance was not clearly defined. It could not be determined if they wore glasses or not.

Personal Traits: Personality and Values

In children's books the librarians' personalities do not correspond to the stereotype Long (1957) depicts as quiet, meek and reserved, or the stern or bossy sour type of librarian of cartoons and journal articles to which Barnhart alludes (1991). Indeed there was but one librarian (1.8%) in pre 1990 titles who was considered reserved

and meek. She was the hesitant Mrs. Brattle, who is compared to "a sparrow…Jumpy and nervous" (Avi 1981, 11). There were only 3 sourpusses in pre 1990 titles, for a percentage of 5.3%. In 1990+ there were no librarians in the meek category but there were 7 (10.4%) that could be labeled as bossy. The overwhelming majority was pleasant and personable, with 91 (over 73%) of both groups in this category. Eleven (19.3%) of pre 1990 titles and eleven (16.4%) of 1990+ titles bubbled with enthusiasm. Table 3 shows that the fictional librarian' s personality refutes the stereotype.

Table 3

Distribution of by Publication Date and Librarian's Personality

Librarian's Personality	Titles Pre 1990		Titles 1990+	
	f	%	f	%
Reserved	1	1.8	0	0.0
Bossy	3	5.3	7	10.4
Pleasant	42	73.7	49	73.1
Bubbly	11	19.3	11	16.4
Total Evaluated (N)	57	100.0	67	100.0

The stereotype of the librarian being refined held true for pre 1990 titles; where 39 (97.5%) were refined, and in 1990+; where 48 (84.2%) were shown to be refined by displaying tact, and politeness. The decrease in the prevalence of this characteristic may be attributed to a general decrease in the value attributed to the old-fashioned ideal of refinement.

In both groups all 98 female librarians who could be rated were portrayed in feminine ways; and of the 22 male librarians, all were portrayed in masculine ways. There were some portrayals that could not furnish enough information on which to base judgments. The stereotype of librarians displaying feminine behavior is verified as common sense tells it would be, since the majority of librarians are women, however, the

stereotype that says male librarians are effeminate is not verified on the whole, with all 22 male librarians displaying overall masculine characteristics. In this purposive sample of children's books, librarians' behavior matched their gender.

Eccentricity, the next stereotypical characteristic analyzed, was not found to characterize the majority of fictional librarians. Only 9 (16.1%) librarians included in this category for pre 1990 titles (N = 56) and 19 (30.2%) librarians for 1990+ (N = 63) were considered eccentric. The growth in eccentricity from the publications before 1990 to the group of books published later, seems to be mostly the result of more humorous, light-hearted and engaging depictions by more modern authors. For example, the refreshing variety of eccentric librarians represented in the group of books published after 1989 includes a misunderstood librarian who is turned into a frog, doomed to answer "Reddit" (Read it) to every question until she is rescued (Mann 1995); a librarian who hops over the desk to confront scary characters who have escaped the confines of their books; an enigmatic librarian who helps release a homesick dragon (Coville 1993) and a librarian who turns into a monster and eats flies (Stine 1997).

An overwhelming majority of the fictional librarians were guided by worthwhile principles and did not conform to the stereotypical puritanical, critical value system. Only 2 librarians (3.9%) in pre 1990 titles (N = 51) were considered puritanical. They were the disapproving, smug Miss Greever who Ramona Quimby irritated (Cleary 1983) and the judgmental Mrs. Putnam (Neufeld 1973). The one librarian (2%) in pre 1990 titles who displayed a weak value system was the domineering Mrs. Oxenbury (Bellairs 1984). In 1990+ titles (N = 60) three librarians (5.0%) were labeled puritanical. One was the dragon, Miss Lotta Scales, a spoof of the librarian stereotype (Deedy 1994). The 4

(6.6%) librarians in 1990+ books, judged to have weak value systems, included two monsters (Stine 1997; Thaler 1997), a racist (Miller 1997) and a thief (Landon 1990).

In the older group of books (pre 1990 titles) the stereotype of the spinster librarian persisted with 21 librarians, which is 61.7% being unmarried (N = 34). In 1990+ only 12 (46.2%) were single (N = 26). However, 28 (45.2%) librarians depicted in pre 1990 titles (N = 62) and 42 (61.8%) librarian characters in 1990+ titles (N = 68) could not be rated for this characteristic. This growing lack of description of marital status may show that this distinction is no longer as important a defining characteristic as it once was. Several women in 1990+ titles were referred to as "Ms.," displaying the influence of feminism and the notion that a woman is not defined by her attachment to a man. In fact the same librarian, the mysterious Hyacinth Priest, is referred to as "Miss" in *Jeremy Thatcher Dragon Hatcher* written by Bruce Coville in 1991 and as "Ms." in Coville's *The Skull of Truth* written in 1997. Marriage is no longer necessarily a goal of the modern woman. Married librarians comprised over 35% of librarians in pre 1990 titles (N = 34) and 46% of the librarians in 1990+ titles (N = 26). There were no divorced librarians evident in these children's books but there was a widow in a pre 1990 title and two widows in titles of 1990+. The following table shows the distribution of librarians' marital status and publication date.

Table 4

Distribution of Librarians by Publication Date and Marital Status

Marital Status	Titles Pre 1990		Titles 1990+	
	f	%		f
Single	21	61.8	12	46.2
Married	12	35.5	12	46.2
Divorced	0	00.0	0	00.0
Widowed	1	2.9	2	7.7
Total Evaluated (N)	34	100.0	26	100.0

Professional Traits: Duties and Attitudes

Stereotypically, the librarian performs boring tasks with little responsibility. Question 16 addresses the librarian's work or job title and it was found that librarians performed a wide variety of tasks from shelving to working in circulation, reference, technical, administrative and bookmobile positions. In children's books it stands to reason that the category with the largest representation is "Children's Librarian" with 27, which is almost 46% of pre 1990 titles' librarians (N = 59) and 36 (55%) of 1990+ titles' librarians (N = 65) so labeled. It is interesting to note that as bookmobile services have become less in vogue, the depiction of librarians in this position has been reduced from 5 (8.5%) in pre 1990 titles (N = 59) to 1 (1.5%) in 1990+ titles (N = 65). Pre 1990 titles' librarians did not support the stereotype with 51 (86.4%) performing varied professional tasks (N=59). 1990+ librarians also refuted the stereotype with 54 (83.1%) doing interesting professional activities (N=65). Table 5 displays the distribution of librarians by publication date and work performed.

Table 5

Distribution of Librarians by Publication Date and Work Performed/Job Title

Work/ Title	Titles Pre 1990		Titles 1990+	
	f	%		f
Shelves Misc. Duties	2	3.5	2	3.08
Circulation	6	10.2	9	13.8
Children's Librarian	27	45.8	36	55.4
Reference Librarian	8	13.6	7	10.8
Technical Services	1	1.7	0	00.0
Authority	10	16.9	10	15.4
Bookmobile Librarian	5	8.5	1	1.5
Total Evaluated (N)	59	100.0	65	100.0

Results from question 17 show that 10 (25.6%) of the librarians in pre 1990 titles (N = 39) performed boring stereotypical duties, which is reduced to 9 (17%) in 1990+ titles (N = 53). Fictional librarians' fascinating tasks included using reference skills to solve a mystery (Hildick 1997), converting an illiterate motorcycle gang to avid readers (Williams 1997), fending off pirates and monsters (Houghton 1989), and transporting books by mule (Beatty 1982) and dogsled (Pinkwater 1988).

The librarian's stereotypical demand for silence was hardly an issue in children's books. Indeed almost 84% of pre 1990 titles' librarians (N = 62) and almost 78% of 1990+ (N = 68) had to be omitted because the issue did not surface. Of the few librarians who could be rated, 7 (70%) of pre 1990 titles and 9 (60%) of 1990+ titles did not conform to the stereotypical trait of demanding silence.

Librarians in children's books supported the helpful stereotype. Fifty-four (96.4%) of the librarians in pre 1990 titles (N = 56), and another 54 (90%) librarians of 1990+ titles (N = 60) were either helpful or went out of their way to provide assistance.

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The librarian's traditionally ferocious protectiveness of library property was not a big issue in children's books with 43 (69.4%) of the librarians depicted in pre 1990 titles not addressing the issue and 54 (79.1%) of 1990+ titles likewise silent on the topic. Of the librarians who did display over-protectiveness, there,were 3 (15.8%) examples in pre 1990 titles (N = 19) and 6 (42.9%) examples in 1990+ (N = 14). Most of the examples in 1990+ are parodies on the librarian image as guardian of materials. There is for instance, Miss Cannon, the librarian, who pulls out her bun, vaults over her desk and points her sword at the no smoking sign, in order to thwart a fire-breathing dragon from incinerating materials (Thaler 1993) and also Mrs. Beamster, also known as "The Laminator," who makes children wear hairnets and rubber gloves and go through a gum detector before entering the library (Thaler 1997).

Stereotypically, the librarian is unapproachable and does not enjoy patrons, although she is efficient nonetheless. In these children's books 53 (98%) of pre 1990 titles' librarians (N = 54) and 55 (88.7%) of the 1990+ titles' librarians (N=62), serve their patrons with enthusiasm. Library Lil sports clown and bear costumes to entertain patrons (Williams 1997) and another librarian uses her ingenuity to protect patrons from storybook tigers, pirates and floods (Houghton 1989).

Scholarship, General and Technical Knowledge

Long's (1957) stereotypical librarian was bookish and scholarly enough to win the admiration of others. There was 1 (4.8%) librarian in pre 1990 titles that met these standards, the aged Keeper of the Scrolls (Alexander 1989), and only 2 (5.9%) in 1990+ publications, including Eratosthenes, the librarian of the famous library of Alexandria (Lasky 1994), and the long-robed, elderly Pagemaster (Kirschner and Contreros 1994). Nineteen (90.5%) of pre 1990 titles' librarians (N = 21) and 29 (85.3%) of 1990+ titles'

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librarians (N = 34) appear educated, although over 66% of pre 1990 titles' librarians and 50% of 1990+ librarians could not be rated.

There were no librarians in pre 1990 titles who fit the stereotypical librarian image of someone who was unaware of anything outside of books. There were only 3 (6.5%) such persons in 1990+ books. Fictional librarians fought for idealistic issues such as intellectual freedom in *Phoebe* (Kaye 1987), where Mrs. Wren defended books against being banned, and political freedom in *The Jedera Adventure* where the brave, imprisoned Dr. Baba is considered a hero by the common people (Alexander 1989). Librarians were also aware of the practical necessities of life, as shown in *Bud, not Buddy* (Curtis 1999), when the librarian gave Bud her sandwich because she realized he was hungry.

In the older group of books (pre 1990 titles) there was only one mention of computer experience among all 62 librarians, and surprisingly, there was little mentioned in the more recent books (1990+). In 1990+ titles 10 (76.9%) librarians had some understanding of computers and only 3 (23.1%) had considerable knowledge and experience (N=13). Descriptions for the other 55 librarians in 1990+ publications did not address computer expertise. However, there is an obvious growth in computer experience from the older to the more recent group of fictional librarians.

Other stereotypical characteristics such as type of footwear, salary level, over dedication, and choice of profession based on respectability, were examined. These traits were eliminated from this study because their incidence was so limited.

CHAPTER V.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Does the librarian's image in children's literature from 1938 until 1999 differ from the traditional librarian stereotype? Chapter IV shows that in most ways it does. The stereotypical traits that persist are that the librarian is still female, white, polite and refined, and helpful. One stereotype that appears in most of the fictional librarians evaluated from books published between 1938 and 1989, but not in the majority of the librarians evaluated from the books published between 1990 and 1999, is that the librarian was of single marital status. Married and single librarians were equal in number in the more recent group of books.

The other stereotypical librarian traits were not confirmed in the majority of the fictional librarian portraits analyzed. In general the librarians were not old, but instead were young or middle-aged. In appearance they were not ugly, unfashionable, bespectacled, wearing buns or balding. They were instead, attractive or fairly good-looking, fashionable, with stylish hair-dos and wore no glasses. Librarians' personalities were not traditionally meek and reserved, but pleasant and outgoing.

There was no evidence of male librarians exhibiting overall feminine tendencies in children's books. Instead librarians of either sex displayed gender typical behaviors. General behavior was reasonable rather than eccentric, and librarians were guided by worthwhile principles rather than puritanical values.

Except for the trait of helpfulness, no professional stereotypical traits persisted. Librarians performed professionally challenging tasks rather than boring ones and provided cheerful customer service rather than reluctant help. Traits that displayed the preference for quiet, over-dedication to the profession, over-protectiveness of materials

and the choice of the profession because of respectability were not addressed in most of the books. This seems to indicate the lack of significance of these issues to the authors of children's books. The topic of the librarian's typically low salary was indirectly referred to in one of the older books (Zindel 1968) and is not shown to be of any importance in children's books.

In the area of scholarship, the scholarly trait is mostly absent in fictional librarians although the majority evaluated did appear to be educated. Most of the librarians were aware of real life issues in contrast to the preconceived ivory tower notion.

In comparing the older (1938-1989) portrayals to the more recent ones (1990-1999), we find an overall fading of some of the stereotypes and refreshing spoofs of others. As previously mentioned, the enduring stereotypical traits found were those of the librarian being female, white, polite and refined and helpful. Each of these predetermined characteristics is diminishing in frequency in the more recent children's literature. On the positive side, more males are being cast in the librarian role and a racial mix is emerging. Both of these changes reflect developments that are occurring in the profession. On the negative side, refinement and helpfulness are found to be decreasing. This is due in part to the entertaining parodies of the librarian stereotype by more modern authors. For instance, Mrs. Beamster, the monster librarian from the Black Lagoon does not exhibit helpfulness or refinement but her depiction is hilarious and memorable (Thaler 1997).

The statistics show that librarians in the newer books appear more frequently to wear more businesslike attire, but there are also more instances of them becoming less attractive, less fashionable, and typically wearing glasses more. What appears to be a

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setback comes as a surprise considering the greater awareness of designer clothes and emphasis on physical appearance of recent times. In the older group of books, the descriptions of appearance of many fictional librarians were insufficient to include them in the evaluation. Also, on further examination of the bizarre outfits of some of the librarians in the more recent set of books, we find larger-than-life caricatures of librarians meant to amuse and not to be taken seriously.

This leads to the attribute of eccentricity which does not persist in the majority of librarians of either group, but which is found in greater frequency in the newer titles. Again this eccentricity is a product of the light-hearted humor and imagination of more recent authors, many of whom are supportive of librarians. Some, such as Beverly Cleary and Marilyn Sachs, were former librarians. Stevens (1988) has no reason to lament the loss of character in the depiction of librarians in children's books. There is an ample supply of unforgettable oddballs to satisfy our desire to stand out and be recognized. Dragons, a clown, a mule driver, and a barbarian are examples of what is available.

As previously mentioned, the stereotypical spinster librarian of the earlier titles (pre 1990 titles) is not typical of the majority of evaluated librarians in the more recent books (1990+). Single and married librarians are equal in the newer offerings. However, it must be noted that in both groups of librarians most of librarians' marital was unknown due to insufficient information. This shows that marital status is not considered important enough to mention in most cases. The librarian is defined by characteristics other than having a spouse. In keeping with modern thought, it no longer makes sense to refer to a woman in a derogatory way as an "old maid." There is no stigma to being single.

In the area of professional traits, the more modern group of fictional librarians displayed the performance of challenging tasks with greater frequency than their earlier counterparts. Fewer librarians in the newer group of books are in bookmobile service, reflecting the reduction of this service in modern times. Several professional traits were not well represented in the samples of literature, so inferences could not be established. The more recent group of librarians were not quite as helpful as the group of librarians in the older books. This again is possibly due to the comical spoofs of recent times, which portray librarians in far-fetched roles as monsters and eccentrics who retain some of the old stereotypes just for fun.

Neither group of librarians noticeably exhibits the scholarly stereotype, although a trend was found for librarians to be educated in the more recent group of books. This trend corresponds to the increase in the level of education for people in general. Although the percentages seem to indicate a greater awareness of real-life issues in the librarians of the older titles (pre 1990 titles), many more in this group lacked sufficient pertinent descriptive material than the newer group (1990+ titles). As expected, greater computer experience was evident in the more recent publications.

As the librarian's image evolves in children's books, we find the old negative stereotype being replaced by a more contemporary view. Authors are mocking the stereotype and it's time for librarians to join in the laughter. The refreshing images presented by modern authors to receptive children serve as inspiring models for librarians. We are responsible for the image we present to the public both individually and collectively. We should use the media, public relations consultants and everything in our power to promote the awareness of librarians as a diverse group of highly skilled knowledge professionals who focus on excellent customer service. Above all, we need to

laugh at ourselves while convincing the world to take us seriously. As our image is reshaped in the real world, we will become more positively depicted in fiction. Likewise, as our fictional representation evolves so to will our public image. For art imitates life just as life imitates art.

APPENDIX A

LIBRARIAN CODING SHEET

General Information about the Book

Title _____

Author _____

Copyright Date _____

General Information about the Librarian

1. What is the librarian's role in the story?

__ Major character
__ Minor character

2. What is the librarian's sex?

__ Female
__ Male

3. What is the librarian's age?

__ Old (50+)
__ Middle-aged (35-49)
__ Young (under 35)

4. What is the librarian's race or ethnic background?

__ White (Assumed, unless stated otherwise)
__ African American
__ Asian
__ Animal Personification

Appearance

5. Which best fits the librarian's physical appearance?

__ Unattractive; plain-looking; homely
__ Fairly nice looking
__ Attractive; handsome

6. Which best describes the librarian's wardrobe?

__ Unfashionable; dowdy; may be out of date
__ Fashionable; up-to-date; appropriate for the librarian's age
__ Inappropriate for work; too faddish; too casual; unsuitable for the person's age; too individualized

7. Would the librarian's attire be suitable for today's professional business environment?

__ Yes, male wears suit and tie; female wears fashionable suit, dress or accessories.
__ No, wardrobe would be unacceptable

8. Which best describes the librarian's hair style?

__ Female wears hair in a bun; male is balding
__ Stylish
__ Inappropriate for a professional setting; too long, too flamboyant or unkempt

9. Does the librarian wear glasses?

__ Wears old-fashioned spectacles or unstylish regular glasses
__ Wears regular glasses
__ Wears no glasses

Personal Traits: Personality, Values, Attitudes

10. Which best describes the librarian's personality?

__ Reserved, quiet, meek; displays little emotion
__ Lacks warmth; has sour disposition; bossy
__ Appears pleasant and personable
__ Bubbles with enthusiasm and energy; very pleasant and personable

11. Which best characterizes the degree of the librarian's refinement?

__ Refined, tactful and polite
__ Behavior indicates some refinement; may use slang, profanity, or behave inappropriately
__ Behavior is offensive; may use crude language

12. Is the librarian portrayed in a feminine way?

__ Whether male or female, displays more feminine traits
__ Whether male or female, displays more masculine traits

13. Is the librarian's behavior controlled by any eccentric habits, interests, or beliefs?

__ Displays eccentric behavior
__ Behavior is reasonable

14. Which best describes the librarian's virtue, integrity, and value system?

__ Has puritanically high standards; may criticize those whose behavior conflicts with these standards
__ Appears to be guided by worthwhile principles
__ Value system is weak or non-existent; possibly amoral

15. Which best describes the librarian's marital status?

__ Single
__ Married
__ Divorced
__ Widowed

Professional Traits: Duties and Attitudes

16. Which best describes the librarian's work or job title?

__ Shelves books; performs general, miscellaneous duties
__ Works in the circulation department
__ Children's librarian
__ Reference librarian
__ Works in technical services
__ Has position of authority: director; assistant director; department head supervisor
__ Bookmobile librarian
__ Can not be determined

17. Which best describes the nature of the librarian's tasks?

__ Duties are boring, routine, and can be learned on the job
__ Duties are interesting, challenging, and suggest academic preparation

18. Which best describes the librarian's tolerance for noise?

__ Demands quiet at all times
__ Prefers silence but tolerates some noise
__ Undisturbed by noise

19. How helpful is this individual?

__ Goes out of way to provide assistance
__ Appears helpful
__ Rarely volunteers his assistance

20. What is the librarian's attitude to library property?

__ Guards the property as if it were his own; might withhold materials from patrons if they appear irresponsible
__ Expects people to take care of the library's property but doesn't stand guard over the materials
__ Unconcerned about the way people treat library property

21. What is this librarian's attitude to patrons?

__ Finds them a nuisance
__ Enjoys serving patrons, friendly, approachable

22. Did this person choose to be a librarian because it is a respectable vocation?

__ No, qualified for nothing else
__ Yes, deliberately choose this profession

<u>Scholarship, General and Technical Knowledge</u>

23. Which best describes the librarian's scholarship?

__ Extremely scholarly; pedantic; bookish
__ Appears educated; displays scholarship
__ Appears somewhat ignorant

24. Regarding real-life issues and problems, which best exemplifies the librarian's awareness and concern

__ Has no interest in anything but knowledge derived from books
__ Unaware; unconcerned
__ Aware; interested

25. What best describes the librarian's computer expertise?

__ Has some understanding: may have some experience
__ Has considerable knowledge and experience

APPENDIX B

READING LIST

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